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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
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                         SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
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                              HOUSTON DIVISION
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     UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
                                         ) CRIMINAL ACTION NOS.
     VS.
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                                         ) 4:19-CR-135-1 AND
                                        ) 4:19-CR-135-2
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     RAFAEL E. PINTO-FRANCESCHI, AND
     FRANZ H. MULLER-HUBER
                                         ) 10:04 A.M.
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                                 SENTENCING
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                    BEFORE THE HONORABLE GRAY H. MILLER
                                 MAY 6, 2021
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     APPEARANCES:
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     FOR PLAINTIFF:
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     MS. SARAH E. EDWARDS
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     (713)250-5584
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     Proceedings recorded by mechanical stenography, transcript
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THE COURT: Please be seated.

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Good morning, everyone. I guess everyone is social distancing with family units? Everybody's got masks on? Very good.

All right. I'm going to go in the order that we have listed on the docket. So, first of all, I'm going to call criminal case 17-394, United States of America versus Jose Orlando Camacho.

I think what we could do, since everybody is here at the same time, I could get all of the defendants and their attorneys to come up, and I could do the preliminary stuff for one time, and then we could do the individual sentencings, if everybody's in agreement with that.

So let me call the Camacho case first, and then I'm going to call criminal case 18-611, United States of America versus Ivan Alexis Guedez; and criminal case 19-135-1, United States of America versus Rafael Pinto-Franceschi; and criminal case 19-135-2, United States of America versus Franz Muller-Huber.

So are all the defendants present in the courtroom?

If you'll just stand with your attorneys, you don't have to come up here right now, but I've got everybody's appearances here, and we'll make a formal appearance when we get to that. But I want to begin, if we -- if I can -- let's see. Where are we?

The defendants are all present. Some have

interpreters who will be interpreting the proceedings for them 1 2 this morning, but this is a sentencing hearing in each one of your individual cases, and I want to start by letting the --3 each of the defendants know the Court's sentencing procedures. 4 The Supreme Court has held in the Booker case --10:06:34 MS. EDWARDS: I'm sorry, Your Honor, to interrupt, but 10:06:37 7 I believe that two of the defendants who do need interpretation don't have their headphones on. So if we're going to do this, 8 they may want this portion interpreted. 9 THE COURT: Good. Thank you. Thank you for pointing 10:06:4810 11 that out. Who needs an interpreter, which of the defendants? 10:06:5012 10:07:0113 MR. FRIEDMAN: Mr. Pinto, Judge. 10:07:0214 THE COURT: All right. Mr. Pinto. 10:07:0215 I'm sorry to catch you unaware. I just thought this 16 might be an easier way to handle it. 10:07:0517 All right. So anybody else? Any other defendants 18 need an interpreter? MR. COLLINS: Mr. Muller, Your Honor. 10:07:1419 10:07:1520 THE COURT: Ah, Mr. Muller. Thank you. 10:07:2321 All right. Mr. Muller, you want to put on the headphones? 22 10:07:2523 All right. I'm going to start again. This is a 24 sentencing hearing for each of you this morning, and I want to 25 start by briefly describing the Court's sentencing procedures.

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The U.S. Supreme Court has held, in the *Booker* case, that the sentencing guidelines are advisory and not mandatory for judges.

Booker requires the sentencing court to consider the guideline ranges, but it permits the Court to tailor the sentence in light of other statutory concerns as well.

The Court, in the exercise of its sentencing discretion, will rely on the factors set out in Section 3553(a) to fashion an appropriate sentence in each of your cases to achieve the congressionally mandated purposes of sentencing as set forth in the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984. The Court will endeavor to faithfully apply the directives within the guidelines, in their entirety, to determine the total offense level and the criminal history category under the guidelines. Thereafter, the Court will exercise its discretion to determine the appropriate sentence.

In doing so, the Court will give considerable weight to the sentencing range calculated under the guidelines. Any comments by the Court in the course of the sentencing are not to be construed as an indication that the Court believes that the guidelines are mandatory or that they constrain the Court's ultimate sentencing discretion.

The standard of proof for factual finding in connection with sentencing is preponderance of the evidence, and in determining whether that standard has been met, a presentence report is generally considered sufficiently reliable to be used

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by the trial court as evidence in making the factual
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             determinations, which are required by the sentencing guidelines.
                       All right. So I will start, now, with Mr. Camacho,
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             please.
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                   (The Court heard other matters.)
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                       THE COURT: All right. Criminal case 19-135,
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             United States of America versus Rafael Pinto-Franceschi.
                       MR. FRIEDMAN: Good morning, Your Honor -- still this
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             morning -- Jonathan Friedman on behalf of Mr. Pinto. He's
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             present with the assistance of a Spanish-speaking interpreter.
                       THE COURT: All right. Good morning, Mr. Friedman and
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             Mr. Pinto.
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                       And Ms. -- oh, Ms. Edwards has disappeared.
                       MR. BRADYLYONS: That's right. Good morning,
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            Your Honor. Drew Bradylyons on behalf of the United States.
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                       THE COURT: Tell me your name again.
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                       MR. BRADYLYONS: Draw Bradylyons.
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                       THE COURT: Bradylyons, okay. Good morning to you,
             sir.
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                       All right. I have reviewed the presentence report in
             Mr. Pinto's case. Let's see. The government didn't file any
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             objections --
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                       MR. BRADYLYONS: That's correct, Your Honor. No
             objections.
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                       THE COURT: No objections by the government.
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All right. The defendant had objected to the plus two 11:17:57 1 2 for multiple incidents of bribery alleging that it all was one 3 scheme, and so, therefore, there shouldn't be the plus two. And, let's see, I think there was also something with respect to 4 the financial condition. I've taken into account what you have 5 said about that, but the only one that affects the guidelines is 6 7 your first objection. 11:18:20 8 MR. FRIEDMAN: That's correct. THE COURT: All right. What would you like to say 11:18:20 9 about that? 10 MR. FRIEDMAN: Judge, I think you summed it up in 11:18:2211 (inaudible) --12 THE REPORTER: I'm sorry. Microphone. 11:18:2413 11:18:2414 MR. FRIEDMAN: I think you summed it up in how you 15 just characterized it. I see it as -- and I think the Court, if 16 you look at it factually, there was a meeting, and we heard 17 about the meeting with Mr. Pinto, Mr. Camacho, Mr. Guedez, where they agreed to pay 3 percent, and I understand that the 18 3 percent was for a couple of things. It was in exchange for 19 payment priority for the invoices that were aging (inaudible) --20 THE REPORTER: I'm sorry. I can't hear you. 11:18:5521 MR. FRIEDMAN: But it was also from the government's 11:18:5822 investigation to award or to refer end users in Venezuela to use 23 Venequip's parts -- or one of their parts and equipment, which 24

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was, basically, Caterpillar.

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The way I'd look at it, Judge -- and I think the Court looks -- should look at it is the 3 percent was sort of stetched -- etched in stone from the beginning, and it was really for the payment of these outstanding invoices. And I would suggest to the Court if PDVSA -- if these officials would have allowed the payment of all the invoices at one time, there would have been only one 3 percent payment that would have been made.

I don't think, necessarily, the referring of end users to use Venequip's equipment, the Caterpillar equipment -- I understand that's part of what was agreed upon, but really, primarily, it was the money, getting the past-due invoices paid.

So looking at it in that light, Your Honor, I would ask the Court to sustain our objection that, although there were 32 different payments that went out from Venequip to this fictitious company, in essence it was for one purpose, and really, ultimately, the only thing that was really checked and rechecked was getting these payments, getting the outstanding balances paid.

I looked up some of the cases that the government cited in their memo. Clearly, in those cases -- and there's more than one contract that -- you know, there was a bribe made for performance on this contract. There was a bribe made for performance on another contract, and I can see, when there's more than one contract, obviously, you can say there's more than one bribe.

But in the factual situation that we have here -- and 11:20:55 1 2 I think the Court's quite familiar with how this operated -- it 3 was primarily for the payment. That 3 percent was what it was, and when those invoices got paid, they would pay the 3 percent. 4 I don't think there was ever -- really ever any concern about 5 end users referring business to them. 6 I understand that happened, but I think even if that 11:21:16 7

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didn't happen and nobody ordered anything further from Venequip,

I think the 3 percent was going to continue to be paid because
those were outstanding invoices of substantial amounts of money
that were due for, you know, legitimate products that were
ordered.

So with that, Judge, we'd ask you to sustain the -- our objection to that two-point enhancement.

THE COURT: All right. And the government's position is...?

MR. BRADYLYONS: We believe that the guidelines were correctly calculated, Your Honor. The application notes permit more than one bribe to be traded — treated as a single bribe when they are related payments that, in essence, constitute a single incident of bribery or extortion, e.g., a number of installment payments for a single action, and that is not the case here, Your Honor.

This was a series of bribes over the course of a three- or four-year period, thirty-two specific instances of

bribery for two separate things, the referral of Venequip's services and products, as well as payment on these invoices. It think that puts us squarely within the heartland and the plain text of the more-than-one-bribe enhancement.

THE COURT: All right. I'm going to overrule your objection on -- on that. I'm going to keep the plus two.

So, therefore, I'm going to adopt the presentence report and find that the total offense level is 27 with a criminal history category of one. That yields a recommended period of imprisonment of 70 to 87 months; a period of supervised release of three years; a fine range from 12,000 to 500 [sic] to \$6,941,561.26; and a special assessment of \$200.

All right. So the government has filed a 5K in this case requesting a sentence of 56 months.

MR. BRADYLYONS: That's correct, Your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. You want to say anything about that other than what's in your sentencing memorandum?

MR. BRADYLYONS: With respect to the 5K, Your Honor,
Mr. Pinto was immediately truthful with law enforcement when he
was approached, and he provided assistance relating to the
conduct that took place at Venequip, which allowed and furthered
the government's investigation and likely resulted in the guilty
plea of an additional coconspirator, and we believe that rises
to the level of substantial assistance and warrants a 20 percent
reduction in sentence.

THE COURT:

Thank you.

All right. Mr. Friedman?

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MR. FRIEDMAN: I concur with all of what the government indicated with regard to his assistance in that respect, Judge. We provided a sentencing memorandum to the Court, and as you will note in our first paragraph of the sentencing memorandum, I don't ask for probation. I do put in there that we're going to ask for a significant downward variance from the guideline range, but we are not seeking probation here today.

And the reason, Judge, is because we -- we've looked at the sentences that the Court has handed down. We've looked at not only the payer side of things, which Mr. Pinto was part of, but we also looked at the sentences of some of the people who received the bribes, and it seems that's -- what's common a trend in all of the sentences this morning, and even the sentencings that you held in the past, is the culpability and the responsibility as to what individuals have benefited personally.

And I think that's a big concern for the Court, and that's what I'm looking at: What did Mr. Pinto benefit personally? And what he benefited personally is -- I believe it's approximately \$985,000.

What the Court should also note, which makes Mr. Pinto a little different than some of the other folks that have been

before the Court and some of the other coconspirators in this 1 2 particular case, is that Mr. Pinto was an employee. He wasn't an officer. He wasn't a director. He wasn't the owner, 3 clearly, of the Venequip company. He was an employee. 4 His account was PDVSA in Venezuela, and he had worked, 11:25:50 5 as I put in the memorandum, for a number of years, going from a 6 7 clerical person when he was living in Venezuela, to moving to the United States, eventually becoming an account manager, and 8 that's where, basically, it ended for him. 9 11:26:1010 11

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But when Mr. Pinto was getting pressure from the Venequip corporation to, basically, you know -- these outstanding invoices, which I think were, perhaps -- and the government can correct me if I'm wrong -- maybe 60, \$70 million of invoices for parts, machinery, what -- what have you, was not getting paid. Mr. Pinto, unfortunately, now in hindsight, obviously, used bad judgment, but when he had that meeting with Mr. Pinto -- with Mr. Camacho and Mr. Guedez, he brought it back to the Venequip people.

He went to his boss, Mr. Muller, who you'll deal with next, but it was brought up the chain of hierarchy in the Venequip corporation. My understanding is they, obviously, had a meeting on this, and they endorsed it.

They went back and said, Yeah, we want to participate in this. We need to get these invoices paid. And, unfortunately, Mr. Pinto delivered that news, and that's when

1 the process started.

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So obviously, you know, it sort of was reinforced, at least, by his company that he was working for, We're going to do this. The money wasn't coming from him. He wasn't receiving all of the millions of dollars for past-due invoices, but he did receive that personal benefit of the, I believe, 1 percent of the total amount for a period of time, and then maybe it dwindled somewhat when Mr. Muller got involved.

So we look at personal benefit, and when I look at the chart, which seems to be common in a lot of our memorandums -- I like the government's chart because it has a little more detail than the chart I provided. But, you know, I look at, for instance, Mr. Padrone (phonetic), and we've heard, in Mr. Camacho's sentencing, the government's articulating why, in fact, you know, he received an 18-month sentence when his personal benefit was over \$9 million, almost nine, ten times what Mr. Pinto personally benefited from.

And he did cooperate, but so did Mr. Pinto as well.

Mr. Pinto got a 20 percent recommendation; Mr. Padrone got a

33 percent. I mean, I don't know if you can quantify, really,
what that really means, but basically in the same neighborhood.

But \$9 million as a personal benefit, receiving

18 months imprisonment, that's why I came to the Court, and the

first thing I said is, We're not asking for probation, but what

we think is a reasonable sentence that is sufficient would be

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anywhere from a year -- and I say that other -- rather than a year and a day, but a year because of Mr. Pinto's status here in the United States. He's a resident alien. He's here lawfully, and as the Court has read the memorandum, you can see his background and history.

He's here today with his wife in the back and some family friends. They have the two small children. So we ask, if the Court is going to impose a period of imprisonment, consider a year only because I believe a year and a day will have some implications for Mr. Pinto with regard to immigration.

Not -- I'm not an immigration expert, but I've had cases in the past, in other districts where I'm from, where a guy got a year and a day from a court, and it became a maj- -- a big issue where if it was one day less, it would have meant the world to my client. And I can't recall exactly what happened with that, but from that experience, I'm asking the Court to perhaps consider a year of incarceration for Mr. Pinto.

Just looking at the chart, for instance, Mr. Millan (phonetic), his personal benefit was \$533,000 -- Mr. Pinto's is a slight bit more than that -- and he also, obviously, cooperated, but he got probation. So asking for a sentence of a year, but no more than an 18-month sentence, we feel would be sufficient but not greater than necessary under the circumstances of this case, Judge.

Now, I know, at the same time that other people have

paid back some of the funds that are part of the monetary 1 2 judgments, my client has not been able to do that. Unfortunately, he's just not been able to do that; however, his 3 intentions are good, that he would like to do that, and he will 4 do that, and when he is finished serving his period of 5 incarceration, I would imagine the Court's going to put him on a 6 7 period of supervised release, and he'll make every attempt to do so in that regard. 8 I really don't want to take any more of the Court's time, Judge. I think we're being sort of reasonable in our 10 11 request. If you look at the monies and the benefits and my 12 client's role in what he did, I think that a year is, obviously, strict -- that's substantial punishment. He'll be away from his 13 14 family and a whole other bunch of ramifications to himself as a 15 result of that, Judge. 11:31:4416 My client would like to address the Court. 17 prepared a written sort of speech, and it should take about five minutes for him to read that. 18 THE COURT: Sure. 11:31:5219 11:31:5320 Mr. Pinto, come forward, please. 11:32:0321 THE DEFENDANT: I'm a little nervous, so I would like to apologize, Your Honor. 22 THE COURT: No problem. 11:32:0723 11:32:0924 THE DEFENDANT: With all due respect to Your Honor, I

thank God for letting me be present here today accompanied with

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started out from a very low-level job. Fifteen years later, I

my family in this hearing. I would like to thank my wife, 1 2 Giovanna (phonetic), and let her know that I will be forever thankful for the support she has given me (indiscernible) --3 THE REPORTER: I'm sorry? 11:32:39 THE INTERPRETER: In spite of the fact she came into 11:32:39 5 my life after the facts I'm being accused of today. 6 7 THE DEFENDANT: I would like to thank God for my two 11:32:57 daughters, Miranda and Camilla (phonetic), who have come into my 8 9 life to make -- to give my life sense and make me a more 10 responsible person. I would like to -- I would like to thank my parents and my five -- and my five brothers, especially 11 12 Francisco, who is here today, my mother-in-law, Giovanna Marrero (phonetic), and all of my family in general. 13 11:33:3614 I would like to thank my lawyer, Mr. Jonathan. 15 would like to apologize to my family for what happened ten years ago. Now I understand this will affect their lives. 16 I would like -- I stand before you -- I stand before 11:34:0717 Your Honor -- I stand feeling very ashamed before Your Honor, 18 and I would like to -- and the prosecutor and the agents, and I 19 would like to apologize to all of them -- to all of you. I was 20 raised by my parents in a healthy home full of happiness. I was 21 formed under Catholic principles, and since I was very young, I 22 was taught to respect people and value family. 23 For over 15 -- for 15 years, I worked for Venequip. I 11:34:4924

wife, and emotional stability. Today, I'm responsible for my --

for my mom -- for my dad and my mom, who are 84 and 80 years,

climbed to the post of manager of government accounts. All 1 government accounts were under my responsibility. 2 By that time, I wanted to be the youngest and most 11:35:30 3 successful executive. The company had 1,300 employees. For 4 those people, I was always a hero who was always to protect 5 their jobs. I always thought I -- I had (indiscernible) --6 11:36:01 **THE REPORTER:** I'm sorry? 7 THE INTERPRETER: I always thought I have a great -- I 11:36:01 8 have built a career in the company. 9 THE DEFENDANT: The owner for the company -- the 11:36:1510 company owner were aware of everything that was being done and 11 12 gave their authorization. For many -- for many, it's not a secret that Venezuela is undergoing a economic and social 13 14 crisis. Corruption is a fact of everyday life for people who, 15 one way or another, work for the Venezuelan government. 16 Unfortunately, this evil reached me, and I accepted it. 11:37:0017 A long time -- a long time after -- a long time later, I understand how serious my participations was. I want to clear 18 up that I was an employee and, as such, I was just doing my job. 19 The company owners received the great -- the big economic 20 benefits. 21 Today, ten years later, I'm -- I can thank God for 11:37:2922 having a beautiful family, a stable job with my -- along with my 23

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1 respectively, and they're still living in Venezuela.

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To end, Your Honor, I would like -- I want to -- I would like to ask mercy from the Lord and from you, Your Honor.

I -- I ask you to grant me the opportunity to correct my mistakes and allow me the possibility of being -- of being with my family's side because they need me now more than ever. I promise I will -- I promise I will show you that I have -- that I have taken the right path, and I will live my life in honesty and -- in an honest way.

THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Pinto.

All right. Anything else you would like to say with regard to sentencing?

MR. BRADYLYONS: Just briefly, Your Honor. I know the scheme has been described repeatedly this morning. I would note that Mr. Pinto was at that initial meeting where this scheme was conceived of and that this scheme then took place over the course of an additional three or four years with as many as 32 bribes. This type of corruption that's difficult to detect and involves large dollar amounts is exactly the type that calls for a sentence that promotes general deterrence and respect for the law.

That being said, Mr. Pinto has been a productive cooperator for the United States. He's provided substantial assistance. He's been very helpful, and he quickly took responsibility for his conduct.

THE COURT: Thank you.

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All right. I do believe a custodial sentence is warranted in this case. I am going to grant the government's 5K motion. Not surprisingly, I'm going to go down a little lower than what the government has recommended.

I do note in this case, though -- it's different from the first two -- is that there are two counts of conviction in this case as opposed to one in each of the first two cases.

But, certainly, I think the cooperation is important and should be rewarded, but taking into account the 3553(a) factors.

Pursuant to the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984, it is the judgment of the Court that the defendant is hereby committed to the custody of the Bureau of Prisons to be imprisoned for 24 months as to Count 1S, and 24 months as to Count 2S, to be served consecutively [sic] for a total of 24 months.

Upon release from imprisonment, the defendant shall be placed on supervised release for a term of three years. This term consists of three years as to each of Counts 1S and 2S to run concurrently for a total of three years. Within 72 hours of release from the custody of the Bureau of Prisons, the defendant shall report in person to the probation office in the district to which the defendant is released.

While on supervised release, the defendant shall not commit another federal, state, or local crime, shall comply with the mandatory and standard conditions of supervision adopted by

this Court, and shall abide by any mandatory conditions required

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by law, and the following special conditions:

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You must immediately report to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and follow all of their instructions and reporting requirements until any deportation proceedings are completed. If you are ordered deported from the United States, you must remain outside the United States unless legally authorized to reenter. If you do reenter the United States, you must report to the nearest probation office within 72 hours after you return.

You must seek proper documentation from U.S.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement authorizing you to work in the United States. You must provide the probation officer with access to any requested financial information and authorize the release of that financial information. The probation office may share the financial information with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

You must not incur new credit card charges or open additional lines of credit without the approval of the probation officer. You must not engage in any occupation, business profession, or volunteer activity that would require or enable you to have access to bidding or sales account management without the approval of the probation officer.

You must submit to substance abuse testing to determine if you have used a prohibited substance. You must pay the costs of that testing if you're financially able. You may

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not attempt to obstruct or tamper with the testing methods.

It is further ordered that United States -- that the defendant shall pay to the United States a fine of \$12,500 and a special assessment of \$200.

Having assessed the defendant's ability to pay, payment of the total criminal monetary penalty shall be due as follows: The defendant shall begin payment immediately. Any unpaid balance will be due in payments of the greater of \$25 per quarter or 50 percent of any wages earned while in prison in accordance with the Inmate Financial Responsibility Program of the Bureau of Prisons.

Any balance remaining after release from imprisonment shall be paid in monthly installments of \$100 to commence 60 days after release from imprisonment to a term of supervision. All payments are to be made through the United States District Clerk, Southern District of Texas.

Let's see. Do we have a preliminary order of forfeiture in this case, or a final --

MS. EDWARDS: We have a money judgment, Your Honor, which we would ask be incorporated into the judgment.

THE COURT: All right. Money judgment's already been signed, and that'll be incorporated into the judgment. All right.

MR. FRIEDMAN: Judge, when you were imposing the sentence, myself and I -- Mr. Bradylyons looked at each other.

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I think you -- you said 24 months to each count consecutively.
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             I think you meant to say --
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                       THE COURT: Concurrently.
                       MR. FRIEDMAN:
                                     Okay.
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                       THE COURT: I'm sorry. Concurrently. Thank you.
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                       MR. FRIEDMAN: I just want the record to be clear on
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             that.
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                       THE COURT: Yeah. Probation was already on his feet
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             over there to, yeah, correct me. I'm sorry. I got that wrong.
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             Yes, it's total 24 months. So those will be served --
       10
11:43:5911
                       MR. FRIEDMAN: Judge, with regard to a placement for
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             Mr. Pinto, if the Court could recommend placement in a Bureau of
            Prisons as close as possible to the Southern District of
       13
       14
             Florida, I know there is a camp in the Miami -- in Miami-Dade
       15
             County.
11:44:1716
                       THE COURT: All right.
11:44:1717
                       MR. FRIEDMAN: If the Court can specifically make a
             recommendation that he be imprisoned in the camp, which I
       18
             believe is in Homestead, Florida.
       19
                       THE COURT: I'll make that recommendation. Of course,
11:44:2520
             the Bureau of Prisons decides exactly what kind of facility, you
       21
             know, they're required to serve their time in, but I'll make
       22
             that recommendation.
       23
                       I do need to advise Mr. Pinto of his appellate rights.
11:44:3524
11:44:3825
                       Mr. Pinto, you generally have the right to appeal your
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THE COURT: We don't need to dismiss any counts, do

conviction and your sentence; however, you may give up some or 1 2 all of those rights in a plea agreement, and the plea agreement that you have entered into in this case does, in fact, waive 3 some or all of your rights to appeal. 4 These waivers are generally enforceable; however, if 11:44:52 5 you believe the waiver's invalid, you can present that theory to 6 7 the Court of Appeals. If you file an appeal, it must be filed within 14 days of the entry of judgment. If you cannot afford 8 to pay the costs on appeal, you can ask to proceed without 9 10 paying the costs, and you have the right to have an attorney appointed to represent you on appeal if you cannot afford an 11 12 attorney. 11:45:1713 Anything else from the government? 11:45:1914 MR. BRADYLYONS: The government would move to unseal 15 the plea agreement, Your Honor. 11:45:2116 THE COURT: All right. 11:45:2317 MR. FRIEDMAN: No objection. THE COURT: Unsealed. The plea agreement is unsealed. 11:45:2418 11:45:2619 Voluntary surrender is fine. Your client will have to sign a form before he leaves. So do not let him leave before --20 one more sentencing, and we'll be done, and all four of the 21 defendants can sign their forms. 22 I don't think there's anything else with respect... 11:45:3723 THE CASE MANAGER: Remaining counts? 11:45:4224

11:45:4325

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we?
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                       MR. BRADYLYONS: No, Your Honor.
11:45:46 2
                       THE COURT: Are we sure about that?
11:45:49
11:45:51 4
                       MS. EDWARDS: We're sure. Mr. Pinto pled to a
             two-count information, and I believe a condition of that, the
        5
             indictment was already...
         6
                       THE COURT: All right. Fine. Thank you.
11:45:58 7
                       MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you, Judge.
11:45:59 8
                       THE COURT: All right. Good luck to you, Mr. Pinto.
11:46:00 9
                       All right. So, finally, we're at criminal case
       10
             19-135-2, United States of America versus Franz Muller-Huber.
       11
                       MR. COLLINS: Kevin Collins for Mr. Huber.
11:46:3112
11:46:3413
                       MR. BRADYLYONS: Drew Bradylyons on behalf of the
       14
             United States.
11:46:3615
                       THE COURT: All right. Good morning -- I guess it's
       16
             still -- yes. It is still morning -- to everyone.
11:46:4317
                       I've reviewed the presentence report in this case. No
             objections by the government?
       18
                       MR. BRADYLYONS: That's correct, Your Honor. No
11:46:4919
       20
             objections.
                       THE COURT: All right. And we have the same objection
11:46:5121
             with respect to the plus two for multiple bribes. Do you want
       22
             to say anything other than the -- what you have written in your
       23
       24
             objections?
                       MR. COLLINS: I do, Your Honor, and it's based on what
11:47:0325
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we heard today. 1 THE COURT: All right. 11:47:06 MR. COLLINS: Three times today we've heard two 11:47:07 3 different lawyers in two different cases talk about a meeting 4 that occurred among three defendants sentenced today. At 10:38, 5 Ms. Edwards talked about Mr. Camacho being present with 6 7 Mr. Pinto and Mr. Guedez when they set the terms of the deal. At 11:35, in Mr. Pinto's hearing, Mr. Friedman said it; and then 8 again Mr. Bradylyons, just a little bit later, made the same 9 10 observation. I think, when it comes to evaluating the two-point 11:47:3011 12 enhancement, how does the Court define the terms of the deal, 13 and who was there when the terms were created? One way to look 14 at the terms is it was 3 percent. 11:47:43 15 They got together. They actually had a physical 16 meeting. They thought about this scheme. They thought about 17 the manner and means of the scheme --THE COURT: Does your client have his headphones on? 11:47:5218 THE DEFENDANT: Yes. 11:47:5719 THE COURT: Okay. Thank you. Just want to make sure. 11:47:5820 MR. COLLINS: He -- they thought about the scheme. 11:47:5921 They thought about the manner and means of the scheme. And they 22

came to the -- figured out what the terms were, and the terms

were 3 percent to try to get paid on their invoices, and then

tried to encourage people to purchase more product.

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the dollars paid on the invoices that were ultimately paid by

PDVSA, but the 3 percent didn't change, and there was no one who

got back together and talked about changing the 3 percent. And,

company, told him; got his approval. Then he went to the board

of directors and made the presentation and said, This is our

best way to get our payment -- our outstanding invoices paid,

and they authorized him to create the 3 percent invoices.

Now, what he did do was, when presented with that

In the context of the FCPA, that's wrong. That's

certainly, this specific client in this specific case was not

3 percent, he went to the chief financial officer of the

You can look at that scheme, certainly, in terms of

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present in that meeting.

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illegal. He understands it. He's accepted responsibility for it. But in terms of the two-point enhancement, he wasn't in that meeting, and one way to look at it is the term was

3 percent. The amounts that get paid on 32 invoices are not renegotiating the terms.

THE COURT: And the government's position?

MR. BRADYLYONS: It is true that Mr. Muller was not at that meeting. He did, however, authorize that arrangement and discuss it with others at the company. While the scheme, perhaps, was on a going-forward basis to get 3 percent of each invoice, each invoice is a separate iterative, unique bribe that took place, again, over the course of years. And, again, it's

Mr. Muller is 70 years old, and he is concerned about

the government's position that that really falls within the 1 2 heartland of the more-than-one-bribe enhancement. THE COURT: Even though he wasn't present at the 11:49:44 3 meeting, I think I agree with the government on this one. So 4 I'm going to overrule your objection with respect to the plus 5 two. 6 That means that the Court will adopt the presentence 11:49:51 7 report and find that the total offense level is 27 with a 8 criminal history category of one. That would yield a 9 recommended period of imprisonment, under the advisory 10 guidelines, of 70 to 87 months; a period of supervised release 11 12 of one to three years; a fine range from \$12,500 to \$6,941,561.26; and a \$200 special assessment. 13 11:50:2414 So I note that the government has filed a 5K motion in 15 this case, as well, asking me to go down to a sentence of 56 months. 16 11:50:3317 Correct? 11:50:3518 MR. BRADYLYONS: That's correct. 11:50:3619 THE COURT: All right. So, Mr. Collins, what would you think as far as sentencing is concerned? 20 MR. COLLINS: Your Honor, we filed a motion for 11:50:4421 variance in this case, and we talked about some issues different 22 from the issues that I've heard in the previous sentencing 23 24 hearings today.

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the risk of COVID, and so that was part of it, but we ask the Court to really look at the 3553(a) factors in the context of this case. And going in order, briefly, no one today has pointed the Court to the idea that, perhaps, the Court should look at national sentencing statistics and make sure there's not an unwarranted departure or variance from those statistics, and we provided that as Attachment A to our -- to our motion. We also discussed that.

The trend is going downward in bribery cases -- a sentence under the same 2C1.1 -- and the total number of months in those cases has gone down. We tried to give the Court, in the context of that motion, enough facts to make a finding that this would be an unwarranted departure to come in this high, in this particular range, on this particular case.

Beyond that, we've also argued, like you've heard from other defendants in this case, that: Is this defendant similarly situated to the defendants who received the different types of sentences they received? And we've heard more sentences today.

In the chart we provided, we look at the case in the context of payers of bribes and receivers of bribes, and we provided the Court with a list of payers of bribes, of which Mr. Muller is one and Mr. Pinto was one, and we tried to give the Court that context.

A lot of people have talked about the personal gain

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that these individual defendants have gotten, and the sort of proxy for that is their preliminary order of monetary forfeiture. I would note that in this case, Mr. Muller has the lowest dollar amount there. It's not dispositive, but it is something to consider.

He is taking the steps to try to repay that. He's got to liquidate something in Venezuela, and that doesn't happen easily, but he's taking the steps to try to pay that. I know some of the defendants have come into court and already made their payments.

And then in the context of cooperation, the one thing that's not in the memorandum that I'd like to make sure the Court's aware of before imposing sentence is that the government often will use the percentage substantial assistance as a sort of gauge to help the Court figure out where people should be slotted in. This defendant received 20 percent — and it's the government's prerogative. I'm not arguing against the prerogative, and we're appreciative of that. But this defendant was willing to provide additional information about additional targets, and when sort of COVID happened, that seemed to have fallen — fell apart.

I'm not going to mention the targets in open court, but we were ready, willing, and able to debrief on additional targets, additional cases, and we didn't quite get there. I think part of that was pandemic related, and to the extent that

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that's meaningful, we wanted to make sure the Court was aware of that.

Finally, we do put in our memorandum and in the attachments that 70-year-old people going into federal detention facilities do run the risk, potentially, of getting a disease that, currently, is still plaguing the country and certainly plaguing federal detention centers. I, purposefully, did not ask for probation in our motion. In the same way that I was concerned that the government had asked for consecutive sentences -- I felt that was a little bit of an overreach -- I don't think it's right for defendants to come in and always ask for probation.

What we did ask for is for the Court to consider all of these factors, to think about his age, and if, you know -- to be punished, if the Court would consider home confinement, potentially, as a way to satisfy that punishment. He has been, you know, at home with an ankle monitor that he's paid for, for two years. He's been in perfect compliance. He's not been an issue for his supervisory officers in Florida, and it's burdensome.

It's not the same burden as being in prison, certainly, but he might suffer an enhanced risk if he went into prison given his age and susceptibility to a disease that could end his life. He's in the winter of his life. He's got grandchildren. He's got people that care for him. He cares for

them. 1 I think that he is going to accept the Court's 11:55:09 2 punishment with grace and humility. I think he's been humbled 3 by the fact that he knows, in his heart, that, you know, he's 4 probably -- although they would never tell him this, probably 5 lost some respect of his kids a little bit because they've 6 7 always looked up to him as the, you know, patriarch of the broader family, and he has to live with that. 8 That's all, Your Honor. 11:55:34 9 THE COURT: All right. Thank you. 11:55:3510 The defendant had a statement he would like to make. 11:55:3711 Mr. Muller, is there anything you would like to say? 11:55:3912 13 Just come forward, please, and... 11:55:4614 THE DEFENDANT: (In English) Really, I only want to 15 accept responsibility. I really made a mistake. I want --11:55:5516 (Through interpreter) I want to apologize. 11:55:5717 (In English) -- to apologize to you as a judge, to the U.S. government and all the America as a country. I accept what 18 I did here -- and to my family. Thank you. 19 THE COURT: Thank you, sir. 11:56:1220 11:56:1421 MR. COLLINS: His daughter and son are in the 22 audience, Your Honor. THE COURT: All right. Thank you. 11:56:1923 All right. So what do you think? 11:56:2124 11:56:2225 MR. BRADYLYONS: Just briefly, Your Honor, Mr. Muller

was not at that initial meeting, as we discussed a moment ago. 1 2 He, initially, was not cut into the kickback arrangement. As a result of that, he made less than some of his conspirators. 3 That said, as the president of Venequip, he was well-positioned 4 to stop this conduct, and he did not. 5 With respect to the significance of the scheme more 11:56:44 7 generally, we'd rely on our sentencing submissions, and I know we've made those arguments already this morning. 8 THE COURT: With respect to Mr. Muller vis-a-vis 11:56:56 9 10 Mr. Pinto, Mr. Pinto's an employee. He brings this scheme to 11 Mr. Muller. He gets it approved by the board. He doesn't initially participate in the kickbacks, but he does eventually. 12 11:57:1113 So respective culpability of those two, where do you see this defendant as opposed to Mr. Pinto? 14 11:57:1915 MR. BRADYLYONS: That's a difficult question, 16 Your Honor --11:57:2117 THE COURT: I know. That's why I'm asking you. MR. BRADYLYONS: We -- for the reasons you just 11:57:2318 described, it's a bit of an apples and oranges comparison. 19 Mr. Muller was the president of this company, positioned to stop 20 this, but Mr. Pinto was at that first meeting. He immediately 21 participated. And I think for that reason, perhaps Mr. Pinto 22 would be a little above Mr. Muller. 23 THE COURT: Okay. 11:57:4724 PROBATION OFFICER: Your Honor, I would just point out 11:57:4725

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Upon release from imprisonment, the defendant shall be placed on supervised release for a term of three years. This term consists of three years as to each of Counts 1S and 2S to run concurrently for a total of three years. Within 72 hours of release from the custody of the Bureau of Prisons, the defendant shall report in person to the probation office in the district to which the defendant is released.

While on supervised release, the defendant shall not commit another federal, state, or local crime, shall comply with the standard conditions that have been adopted by this Court, abide by any mandatory conditions required by law, and shall comply with the following additional conditions:

You must immediately report, continue to report, or surrender to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and follow all of their instructions and reporting requirements until any deportation proceedings are completed. If you are ordered deported from the United States, you must remain outside the United States unless legally authorized to reenter. If you reenter the United States, you must report to the nearest probation office within 72 hours after you return.

You must seek proper documentation from U.S.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement authorizing you to work in the United States. You must provide the probation officer with access to any requested financial information and authorize the release of that financial information. The probation officer

may share that financial information with the U.S. Attorney's 1 2 Office. You must not incur new credit card charges or open 12:00:52 3 additional lines of credit without the approval of the probation 4 officer. You must not engage in an occupation, business 5 profession or volunteer activity that would require or enable 6 7 you to have access to bidding or sales account management without the prior approval of the probation officer. 8 You must pay to the United States a special assessment 12:01:11 9 of \$200. 10 12:01:1311 What would the reduced fine rate be, Mr. Hopkins? THE PROBATION OFFICER: 55,600. 12:01:1812 **THE COURT:** 55,600 fine --12:01:2113 12:01:2414 PROBATION OFFICER: 65,600. Six, five. 12:01:2415 **THE COURT:** Six, five. 65,600? 12:01:2716 THE PROBATION OFFICER: Yes, Your Honor. 12:01:2717 THE COURT: Okay. Thank you. 12:01:2818 -- pay a fine of \$65,600 to the United States. assessed the defendant's ability to pay, payment of the total 19 criminal monetary penalty shall be due as follows: 2.0 defendant shall begin payment immediately. Any unpaid balance 21 will be due in payments of the greater of \$25 per quarter or 22 50 percent of any wages earned while in prison in accordance 23 24 with the Bureau of Prisons Inmate Financial Responsibility

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Program.

If I

12:02:5624

THE PROBATION OFFICER: Yes, Your Honor. understood correctly, he's on electronic monitoring at this 25

Any balance remaining after release from imprisonment shall be paid in monthly installments of \$200 per month to commence 60 days after release from imprisonment to a term of supervision. All payments are to be made through the United States District Clerk, Southern District of Texas.

So do we have a money judgment in this case which should be incorporated into the judgment?

MR. BRADYLYONS: We do, Your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. I do need to advise Mr. Muller of his rights to appeal.

Sir, you can generally appeal your conviction and your sentence; however, you may give up some of those rights in a plea agreement, which, in this case, you have entered into a plea agreement which waives some or all of your rights to appeal. These waivers are generally enforceable; however, if you believe the waiver's invalid, you can present that theory to the Court of Appeals.

If you file an appeal in this case, it must be filed within 14 days of entry of judgment. If you cannot afford to pay the costs on appeal, you can ask to proceed without paying costs, and you have the right to have an attorney appointed to represent you on appeal if you cannot afford an attorney.

Mr. Hopkins?

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be.
                 So, yeah.
         1
                       MR. COLLINS: Very good.
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                        THE COURT: All right. Anything else from the
12:03:48 3
         4
             government?
                       MR. BRADYLYONS: No, Your Honor.
12:03:50 5
                        THE COURT: Mr. Collins?
12:03:51 6
                       MR. COLLINS: No, Your Honor.
12:03:52 7
                        THE COURT: All right. Good luck to you, Mr. Muller.
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                       All right. So everybody needs to sign their
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             agreements to self surrender, and then we'll be done. Thank you
        10
        11
             all very much.
                   (Proceedings concluded at 12:04 p.m.)
12:04:0812
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                                           -000-
        14
                        I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript
             from the record of proceedings in the above matter.
       15
       16
       17
             Date: June 21, 2021
                                            /s/ Heather Alcaraz
        18
                                            Signature of Court Reporter
        19
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MR. BRADYLYONS: [21] 6/13 6/16 6/22 9/16 10/14 10/17 18/12 23/13 24/1 24/12 24/18 26/19 27/17 31/24 32/14 32/17 33/15 36/7 37/6 37/9 38/4 MR. COLLINS: [12] 4/18 24/11 24/24 25/2 25/20 27/20 31/20 37/1 37/12 37/18 38/1 38/6 MR. FRIEDMAN: [14] 4/12 6/7 7/7 7/10 7/13 7/21 11/2 21/23 22/3 22/5 22/10 22/16 23/16 24/7 MS. EDWARDS: [4] 4/5 21/18 24/3 37/22 PROBATION OFFICER: [2] 32/24 35/13 THE CASE MANAGER: [1] 23/23 THE COURT: [59] THE DEFENDANT: [6] 15/20 15/23 16/6 17/9 25/18 31/13 THE INTERPRETER: [2] 16/4 17/7 THE PROBATION OFFICER: [5] 33/6 35/11	135 [1] 6/6 14 [2] 23/8 36/19 1400 [1] 1/14 15 [2] 16/24 16/24 17-394 [1] 3/7	202 [1] 1/15 2021 [2] 1/9 38/17 21 [1] 38/17 2300 [2] 1/17 1/24 24 [7] 19/14 19/14 19/15 22/1 22/10 33/15 37/4 250-5584 [1] 2/6 262-7809 [1] 1/15 27 [2] 10/8 27/8 2820 [1] 1/21 2C1.1 [1] 28/10 2S [4] 19/14 19/18 33/24 34/3 3 3 percent [15] 7/18 7/19 8/2 8/7 9/3 9/4 9/9 25/14 25/24 26/3 26/4 26/8 26/12 26/17 26/23 3,280 [1] 33/4 32 [3] 8/14 18/18 26/17 33 percent [1] 13/20 33301 [1] 1/21 3553 [3] 5/7 19/10 28/2 3640 [1] 1/25 394 [1] 3/7 3rd [1] 1/20 4
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